The Institution of Engineers, Australia; Sydney Division
Engineering Heritage Committee

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Mr Graham Peck **Tape Numbers:** MAH 42 and MAH -43

Date: 19 November 1997

Number of Tapes: 2

Restrictions on Use: Nil

Time	Subject	Proper Names
MAH 40 Side A		
0-40	Tape Identification	
40-118	Born 1937, Launceston, Tasmania. Family arrived on 1888 with the First Fleet. Mr Peck lived in Tasmania until 1967.	**Born 1937, Launceston, Tasmania**
188-183	Family background. Mr Pecks father was one of 12 children who lived on a farm near Launceston. When he left home he started a market garden outside Launceston and also did a milk round. Mr Peck recalls going out on the milk round with his father.	**Father a market gardener and milkman**
183-270	Mr Peck attended West Launceston State Primary school and later attended Launceston Grammar where he completed his secondary education. His best subjects were maths and science. His interests included various sports and he recalls that he was always interested in practical things. While attending school he had little idea of what career he would choose.	**West Launceston State Primary School Launceston Grammar**
270-315	On leaving school he took up an engineering cadetship with the Tasmanian Hydro Electricity Commission despite the fact he had won a university entrance scholarship.	**Cadetship with Tasmanian Hydro Electricity Commission**
315-400	Describes work as a cadet and notes the	

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	advantages of this type of training. Notes that while working with the Commission he met many professionals who influenced him to take up the scholarship and study Engineering at Hobart University.	**University Entrance Scholarship**
400-487	Started the Bachelor of Civil Engineering at Hobart University in 1956. The first three years were general Engineering courses and the final year was spent on civil engineering.	**Bachelor Engineering (Civil) 1956**
487-536	Speaks of some of his teachers - Professor Oliver and Malcom Gregory.	**Professor Oliver Malcom Gregory**
536-726	Graduated in 1959 with first class honours. Won a British Commonwealth Scholarship and in 1960 he took up study for a Masters in Saw Mechanics and Foundation engineering at Magill University in Montreal, Canada.	**Graduated 1959 with first Class Honours British Commonwealth Scholarship Magill University, Canada. Masters in Saw Mechanics and Foundation Engineering**
726-866	At the completion of the Masters he returned to Tasmania despite his liking for living in Canada and job offers from the Magill University.	
866-950	Returned to Tasmania with his family in 1962 and took a position with the Tasmanian Public Works Department (had to work for the government to honour the terms of his university scholarship). First job was as part of the supervisory team for the Tasman Bridge. After 1 year he was transferred to the Tasmanian PWD Bridge Section where he worked for a year before being taken on be the Materials and Research Section. In 1966 he had one	**Tasmanian Public Works Department** **Tasman Bridge** **Materials Research Section** **1966 moved to Sydney**

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	more year of bonded work but he decided to move to Sydney to broaden his work opportunities.	
950-1104	He had offers of work from Coffey and Partners and Pearson Bridge. He took the position of Executive Engineer with Pearson Bridge in 1967. At that stage Pearson Bridge consisted of himself and Mr Pearson. While the work with Pearson Bridge was similar to that he had done in Tasmania, the involvement with Pearson Bridge provided a sound background in the commercial side Engineering.	**Coffey and Partners** **1967 Pearson Bridge Executive Engineer**
1104-1180	The projects he was involved in at this time were mainly bridge construction throughout NSW. By the time he left Pearson Bridge in 1968 the business had expanded. In 1969 Mr Peck took up an offer of work with Don Freeman, Melbourne based practise. Mr Peck set up the Sydney office in 1969 and their biggest client was Pearson Bridge. In 1971 Mr Peck rejoined Pearson Bridge Construction Manager and Director. He became Engineering Director and remained in that position until 1984.	**Don Freeman** **1971 rejoined Pearson Bridge**
11870-1240	During this later period with Pearson Bridge he became more involved in project management but retained a keen interest in technical matters.	**Project Management**
1240-1399	Between 1971 and 1984 Pearson Bridge expanded. When he left in 1967 there were 4 Engineers beside himself and Mr Pearson. When he rejoined in 1971 the staff had grown considerably and in 1975 Pearson Bridge became a public	**1975 Pearson Bridge a public company**

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	company. In 1980 the company was taken over by Constains. They became a subsidiary of Constains but retained the name Pearson Bridge. Tony Pearson retired soon after the take over and Mr Peck took a more active role in the company after this. Became dissatisfied at being a small cog in a big wheel. Speaks about philosophical differences between Constains and Pearson Bridge and his frustration at not being able to influence corporate policy. He left the company in the early 1980s.	**Constains** **Tony Pearson**
1399-1525	Speaks about the large Hong Kong motorway joint venture between Constains and pearson Bridge, noting that the strains in the relationship that arose during the course of the project led him to submit his resignation.	**Hong Kong Motorway**
1525-1558	On leaving Pearson Bridge he felt that he did not want to join Pearson Bridges competitors so he started his own Consultancy. In 1985 Mal Evans joined him and they became Evans and Peck. The company now has 75 professionals employed.	**Private consultancy 1985 joined by Mal Evans**
1558-1648	Speaks of projects he was involved with during his years with Pearson Bridge. Notes that the early years were spent designing and constructing bridges. When Mike Elliot joined (1969) the company began to do underground work.	**Mike Elliot**
	Eraring Power Station Cooling Water Outfall Tunnel (1980/81) provided a challenge when the tunnel began to swell behind them as they tunnelled.	**Eraring Power Station Water Cooling Outfall Tunnel**
1648	End Tape MAH 5 Side A	

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Tape : IEA SYD :MAH 42, Side B

Time	Subject	Proper Names
MAH 40 Side B		
0-25	Tape Identification	
25-228	Continues explanation of problems with Eraring Tunnel. Final solution was found through trial and error and involved prestressing the rock.	
228-290	Kings Cross tunnel in 1978 was a straight forward cut and cover job.	**Kings Cross Tunnel**
290-555	Kotara Rail Tunnel (1976/77) was an interesting project. Due to public concern they had to tunnel without the use of explosives but 50 meters in to the tunnelling the rock was at the limit of the rock cutting equipment - wrecked the cutting head. Noel Wagner, Consulting Engineer advised, SRA didn't agree with advice and it ended up in court. A year later the resolved the matter and started back to work tunnelling from the opposite end with a bigger cutter. A road header was used. Problems with cutting the bench meant that they had to use explosives which they did but they knew they had only one chance at it because of public disapproval. Describes how they did it.	**Kotara rail Tunnel** **Noel Wagner** **State Rail Authority**
555-600	Describes work on the Strathgordon Power Station in Tasmania.	**Strathgordon Power Station**
600-710	Speaks of Longos Mine Shafts Project in the Philippines where Pearson Bridge designed and constructed the shafts for the mine. Notes that the work couldn't be paid for in cash so the equipment used for the project was given back in lieu.	**Longos Mine Shafts**

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	Describes the process of reimporting the gear as "personal effects" and the bemusement of Australian customs official on viewing the personal effects!	
710-796	Speaks of the Tuggeranong Sewer Tunnel, noting that at the time it was the biggest job Pearson Bridge had undertaken. (1979/80).	**Tuggeranong Sewer Tunnel**
796-844	Mentions several overseas projects including a new container berth in Port Moresby, and notes that the first offshore project Pearson an Bridge completed was a large bridge project in Kuching (Sarawak). Another project in West Sarawak was a bridge at Bintulu and they also were involved in the Eastern Corridor Motorway in Hong Kong.	**Port Moresby** **Kuching** **Bintulu** **Eastern Corridor Motorway, Hong Kong**
844-1011	Notes that the overseas projects posed special challenges. Describes the Kuching bridge project as a demonstration. Difficulties were faced because of working in an environment where English is the second language of the work force --if you are lucky. On this project most of the work force were unfamiliar with power tools and training was a major problem. Notes that there was a major resources boom in the area during the mid 1970s and as fast as Pearson Bridge trained people other companies snapped up the freshly trained workers.	
1011-1247	Notes that the young engineers who went over to run overseas projects progressed career-wise very quickly. Notes that Pearson Bridge's success in South East Asia is due to their	

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	adaptability in method and approach - ability to take on local ways of doing things. Also notes that by international standards Pearson Bridge was not expensive and the service is of a high standard.	
1247-1438	Notes that Pearson Bridge did a little bit of aid work. Culmantan road project in 1978 funded by ADAB. With Coffey and Partners they were involved in researching, doing documentation etc for a rail project in Tanzania which was dogged by landslides. Notes that Australias' involvement in the project was lost when Australia ceased to fund aid projects in the area.	**Komantan??** **ADAB** **Tanzania**
1438-1464	More recently Evans and Peck have been involved in training managers in PNG in risk management.	**Evans and Peck training in Risk Management**
1464-1543	Notes that as a consultant with Pearson Bridge he became interested in productivity improvement .	
1543-1694	Notes that this interest was borne of a near calamity with the Pearson Bridge Telegraph Point bridge project. On this job he developed some systems and techniques that got them out of trouble on that project and later were used to increase productivity.	**Telegraph Point bridge**
1694-1639	Notes that when Pearson Bridge became a public company they made between 8 and 10% on turnover after tax, double the national average. This was due to their focus on productivity.	
1639	End MAH Side B	

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Tape : IEA SYD :MAH 43, Side A

Time	Subject	Proper Names
MAH Tape 41 Side A		
0-40	Tape Identification	
40-283	Speaks of recent work done by Evans and Peck noting that they are the RTAs technical and commercial advisors for the Eastern Distributor and the M5. They have been advisors for the M2 project as well as having involvement with the and M5 East. They are advisors top Transfield on the air-rail link project and the Melbourne City Link project.	**Road and Traffic Authority** **M5** **M2** **M4** **M5 East** **Transfield** **Melbourne City Link Project**
283-580	Notes that they have developed techniques that are built into the process of these projects. Explains further saying it is a structured way of thinking where gut feeling is put into qualitative terms. Speaks of computer assistance with this work and explains about risk management.	
580-688	Notes that the client base for Evans and Peck is developed through relationships and word of mouth rather than PR. Notes that their success is due to the high quality of service and that the growth of Evans and peck is dependent on the number of quality professional personnel they have on board.	**Client base**
688-1093	Notes that dispute resolution makes up a bit over 18% of their current work. They act as expert witnesses and have the capacity to perform forensic analysis. Notes that major construction disputes involve much technical analysis. Explains	**Dispute Resolution**

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	the techniques they use for "getting the right story" from the experts - the expert enclave technique - explains.	**Expert enclave**
1093-1251	Speaks of the development of his career and states that despite the apparent differences in the type of work he has done, all of his work can be seen to be the application of logical solutions to problems. Mentions as a demonstration the current work on the Orison Crossing.	**Orison Crossing**
1251-1438	Speaks of the work he has done in Education including running a course in contract administration for the Australian federation of Construction Engineers. He also was a visiting fellow at the UNSW . Found direct teaching involvement too much while running a business but he still sits on various committees that give advice on course content and the direction of research	**Australian federation of Construction Engineers Visiting Fellow, University of New South Wales**
1438	End Tape	